of Agent Orange herbicide. 1980 - Mount St. Helen's Erupts 1980 - Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Safe and Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play

There is nothing unique about Americans wanting a safe and healthy place to live, recreate, raise children, have careers, build a future. In 1949, Congress mandated "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family"and reaffirmed it again in 1968. President John F. Kennedy warned in 1963 that if we neglect our cities, we will neglect the nation.

And yet our cities have been neglected. Trends have found families moving to the suburbs as they seek the dream of home ownership, open space, parks and ball fields. New roads and freeways provided easy automobile access to abundant and affordable land, encouraging yet new development and urban sprawl.

The Northwest, and particularly the coastal and sound communities, has grown because of the opportunities created by its residents. Our commitments to economic restructuring, transportation and the environment, give us the opportunity to improve our region's livability and prosperity for years to come.

How do we sustain our region's livability and prosperity? By making economic and environmental decisions that meet our needs and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs; in other words, by avoiding dead ends.

Sprawl

In communities across the nation, there is a growing concern that current development patterns, dominated by what some call "sprawl", are no longer in the long-term interests of our cities, existing suburbs, small towns, rural communities, open space or wilderness areas. Though supportive of growth, communities are questioning the economic costs of abandoning infrastructure in the city, only to build it further out. They are questioning the social costs of the mismatch between new employment in locations in the suburbs and the available workforce in the city. They are questioning the wisdom of abandoning "brownfields" in older communities, eating up the open space and prime agricultural lands at the suburban fringe, and polluting the air of an entire region by driving further to get places. Spurring the smart growth movement are demographic shifts, a strong environmental ethic, increased fiscal concerns and more open views of growth. The result is both a new demand and a new opportunity for smart growth.

This opportunity should not be confused with "no growth" or even "slow growth." People want the jobs, tax revenues, and amenities that come with development. But they want these benefits without degrading the environment, raising local taxes, increasing traffic congestion, or busting budgets. More and more local governments are finding that current development patterns frequently fail to provide this balance.

Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington, are two examples of communities searching for this balance. They have both struggled with the classic pattern of disinvestment in urban/suburban areas while investing in as-yet-unbuilt communities on the fringe. In the last two decades, flight from the core to the suburbs created a

golden ring of the priciest homes encircling the cities and moves further outward in both cases. Million dollar homes now sit on ridges along the eastside of Seattle, that were only twenty years ago homes to rabbits and deer. The rural character of these areas has been hit with traffic congestion, high taxes, decline in public services, and loss of farmland.

Portland, Oregon, however, has managed, with its long-standing urban growth boundary, downtown building boom, and well-developed transit system, to be known as one of the best known and frequently cited examples of smart growth.

Smart Growth

Smart Growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life. It leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, smart growth invests time, attention and resources in restoring community and vitality to city centers and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities. But there is no "one-size-fits-all solution. Successful communities do tend to have one thing in common - a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community - and their plans for development reflect these values.

Current development patterns are all too familiar. There has continued to be a disinvestment in older communities and the flight of much of the middle class to newer, diffuse, single-use developments. Older suburbs now experience the downward economic cycle once thought to be uniquely urban. Indeed, many suburbs now have more in common with urban counterparts than with new suburbs. This has created an opportunity to forge regional problem solving between the city and the surrounding suburbs. This has thus led to investing in existing communities rather than subsidizing flight to as-yet-unbuilt developments. There has been a shift that new growth, especially growth subsidized by state's and the federal government, should add value to existing communities.

The call to reexamine our growth patterns and practices has support. The President's Council on Sustainable Development, a group of business CEO's environmentalists, and government agencies, recommended new patterns of growth to maintain community vitality. While land-use and growth-management activities are the responsibility of state, tribal and local authorities, EPA is uniquely positioned to encourage growth-management measures that take environmental impacts into consideration.

EPA Region 10 uses existing authorities under statues such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act to help minimize the impacts of development activities. Region 10 also focuses on supporting state, tribal and local efforts. Specific activities include improving communications and providing technical expertise and resources to manage growth issues such as wastewater disposal, drinking water, water quantity, waste disposal, transportation and air quality, storm water runoff, and wetlands and habitat loss. EPA also provides funding and support for specific projects through programs such as Sustainable Development Challenge Grants and Better American Bonds

"We will help you build what we hear you are asking for and what is no less than you and your families deserve; livable communities, comfortable suburbs, vibrant cities, and for you grandchildren's well-being and for their grandchildren's too, green spaces."

Vice President Al Gore
January 11, 1999

1984 - Over 2000 people killed in Bhopal, India following toxic gas release 1985 - Union Carbide plant at Institute, West Virginia

Brownfields

Brownfields are abandoned or underused properties where real or perceived environmental contamination has slowed redevelopment. There are hundreds of these sites in the Region, from abandoned factories and shuttered gas stations, to aging rail yards. Cleaning up and reusing these areas often helps to preserve greenspace which would otherwise be used for development.

Since 1995, Region 10 has provided up to $200,000 in seed funding to more than 20 state, local and tribal governments to expedite local site cleanup or assessment. Examples of recent brownfields initiatives include: funding of the Portland Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund, which provides local cleanup loans; the Seattle/King County Job Training Pilot, which is successfully training individuals in need to work on hazardous waste site assessment and cleanup; and supplemental awards to the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department and King County, Washington to perform assessments which promote economic redevelopment and greenspace preservation.

Lead in Children

Cities have faced a myriad of environmental problems: polluted air; lead based paint hazards; asbestos, radon, vehicle gridlock, hazardous waste sites, polluted beaches. All of these threaten the health of the children growing up in our cities. As urban sprawl expanded, many of these same problems moved to the suburbs.

Before 1978, lead-based paint was commonly used in homes and apartment buildings. Exposure can also be traced to contaminated soil and water from mine wastes. Although cases of childhood lead poisoning are on the decline nationally, lead contamination remains a localized concern in parts of Region 10. Lead is a naturally occurring substance that is toxic when ingested or inhaled. Lead is most hazardous to children under six years of age. Health effects include reduced intelligence and attention span, reading/learning disabilities and behavioral problems.

Home sellers and landlords must now disclose known lead-based paint and its hazards to both buyers and renters. Since June 1, 1999, in support of the Clinton-Gore Administration's right to know efforts, any contractor involved in remodeling or renovation is now required to give home owners a copy of a new booklet, *Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home*.

EPA provides grant money to states and tribes for public education and testing activities. The agency also certifies training providers and programs to perform inspections, risk assessment and abatement work. EPA is also beginning to focus on outdoor sources of lead exposure -- such as paints used on playgrounds and fences. For example, EPA awarded the Washington State Department of Health more than $2.5 million in grant funds for determining the extent of threats to children caused by lead paint and lead dust across the state.

Community Tools for Transportation

When city and county governments ask for public participation in local planning, you can bring new ideas and concepts to the table:

Explore alternatives and involve the community. *Look for creative solutions integrating land use, transportation, environment and livability.*

Diversify the transportation system by providing more transportation choices. *More choices enhances personal freedom, economic equity, and environmental protection.*

Emphasize Transportation Demand Management (TDM). *Explore this method of trip reduction through an array of travel alternatives, roadway incentives, financial incentives, work hours and location management.*

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure. *Habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss can be prevented by making better use of the existing infrastructure.*

Consider redevelopment. *Redevelopment prevents sprawl and protects farms, forests, and natural lands. It also improves the existing built environment for people.*

Maintain historic, cultural, natural features, and community character. *Emphasizing local history, culture, and natural history and avoiding impacts to these elements helps to establish or maintain community identity and cohesion.*

releases methyl isocanate. Congress debates possibility of Bhopal-like accident in U.S. 1986 - Emergency Planning and Community